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RURAL AREAS
DEVELOPMENT

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NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT ESTABLISHES CABINET-LEVEL COUNCIL FOR RURAL AFFAIRS

President Nixon took a major step toward the development of a new national rural policy and action early in October by initiating a cabinet-level Council for Rural Affairs.

As Secretary of Agriculture Clifford M. Hardin has said, the Council was created to be concerned with that part of the country outside the designated metropolitan areas.

Council Members Appointed

The President, or in his absence, the Vice President, will preside over the meetings of the Council. The Council members will be: Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, Secretary Hardin, Secretary of Interior Walter J. Hickel, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Robert H. Finch, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development George W. Romney, Secretary of Labor George P. Shultz, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors Paul W. McCracken, Director of the Bureau of the Budget Robert P. Mayo, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity Donald Rumsfeld.

Task Force to Recommend

It is to this Council that the recently appointed Task Force on Rural Development will submit its report and recommendations. This Task Force, made up of leading national figures, is reviewing the effectiveness of present rural assistance programs and their recommendations will propose actions on what might be done in both public and private sectors to stimulate rural development.

The Council, in turn, will plan and coordinate the government's efforts toward improving economic growth, increasing housing and services, alleviating poverty and improving the environment of rural America. The Council will work closely with the States and local communities, with initiatives originating in the communities themselves.

THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

President Nixon said in announcing the new Rural Affairs Council:

"Shortly after I became President, I established a new cabinet-level Urban Affairs Council to help me develop an overall strategy for meeting the problems of the cities and to coordinate the wide variety of government efforts in this area. It is a fact of our national life that the concerns of Rural America also deserve more careful consideration and more effective coordination at the highest levels of government."

The President underscored the importance of the Rural Council's work. He pointed out that at least one-third of the housing in Rural America is presently substandard, and that more than 3 million rural Americans have not completed five years of school. The President noted furthermore that one-third of our rural communities with a population over 1,000 have no public sewage facilities.

"It is also important to note that the population of our country is likely to grow by 50 percent in the next thirty years . . ." The President said. "Where these next hundred million persons locate is a tremendously important question for our society. After an era in which people have moved steadily from the country-side to large and crowded cities, we must now do what we can to encourage a more even distribution of our population throughout our country. The Rural Affairs Council can help our nation to meet this challenge by helping Rural America. . . ."

SECRETARY HARDIN ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Secretary Hardin said that the Council's primary concern would be areas outside the designated metropolitan areas which encompass most of the Nation's geography, about 35 percent of the total U. S. population, about 60 percent of the substandard housing and nearly half of the poor people in the nation.

The Secretary pointed out that a major goal of the Council would be to facilitate the redistribution of our population by creating opportunities in small towns and rural areas. This would help to offset the pressures anticipated by an estimated increase of 100 million Americans by the turn of the Century.

The Rural Affairs Council, he said, is concerned with encouraging the creation of more jobs in the towns and small cities in Rural America, the training of people to fill those jobs, and the general improvement of living conditions. "If the program is as successful as we want it to be," he said, "we will have created a reverse migration and removed some of the population pressures from the cities. And, additionally, we will have provided American families of the future with real choices as to where they wish to live."

As an example of one plan that the Council might be ready to put into action the Secretary mentioned a proposal already discussed in the House Committee on Agriculture. The idea is to provide some financial help to local units of government in acquiring land adjacent to small cities and communities for future planned expansion.

Secretary Hardin also said that the work of the Rural Affairs Council will not overlap with such regional programs as the Appalachian program but rather that Council efforts will coordinate the programs of Federal Departments involved in rural advancement.

EXCERPTS FROM THE SECRETARY'S REMARKS
ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Secretary told the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges in Chicago:

"The further development of Rural America must proceed with speed and dispatch because of the people and the problems that exist there, and also, because of the utter necessity of relieving the population pressures that are growing daily in our large cities."

Growth Communities to Get Help

"Communities which have already exhibited strong growth potential should be helped to develop. When local community leadership and private enterprise have shown the initiative necessary for sound development, government at all levels should be willing to help. . . .

"While the initiatives are expected to come from the State and communities, it is important that the resources and services of the Federal establishment be properly ordered and directed. The role of the Rural Affairs Council is to provide this sense of direction and to bring with it the dedicated support of the President.

Council to Focus Programs

"The Rural Affairs Council will ensure that the government is a full partner, that all the programs that have application to Rural America will be brought to bear--HUD's housing and planning money, Labor Department's training programs, HEW's educational and assistance programs, Commerce Department's economic development projects, the Small Business Administration's funds and guidance, these and many others.

"The Council will carry on the closest cooperation with the Urban Affairs Council, and other Federal agencies."

"Specifically, the Rural Affairs
Council will seek to:

* Achieve coordination between Federal departments in all matters that may affect rural Americans.

* Encourage decentralization of government and coordination of programs between the Federal and State and local governments.

* Encourage the effective utilization of voluntary organizations.

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* Secure up-to-date comprehensive information on the problems that confront rural America. Then identify the causes of those problems and develop solutions, either through existing programs or by initiating new programs.

* Encourage action on a regional, State and local basis."

THE DEPARTMENTAL RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

A Departmental Rural Development Committee in Washington will serve under the direction of Dr. Thomas K. Cowden, the Assistant Secretary for Rural Development and Conservation, and will develop USDA policies and programs, set priorities, and coordinate agency actions. Agency administrators and deputy administrators will comprise the membership of this Committee.

USDA COMMITTEES TO FORM AT STATE LEVEL

The Under Secretary of Agriculture J. Phil Campbell has directed that USDA Committees for Rural Development be established in each State. The State Committees will provide the field support for rural development initiatives as they come from the President's Council for Rural Affairs. They will also provide continuing help to individuals and communities to improve the quality of life in rural areas. Membership will include representatives from the Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, Farmers Home Administration, Rural Electrification Administration, and the State Cooperative Extension Service. The administrators of each agency will designate the State representative for the agency. The Directors of the State Cooperative Extension Service will convene the State Committees. Each committee will elect its officers and develop its own operating procedures.